

Transactions

MAY/JUNE 2007

TRANSPORTATION NEWS
FOR THE NINE-COUNTY
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA



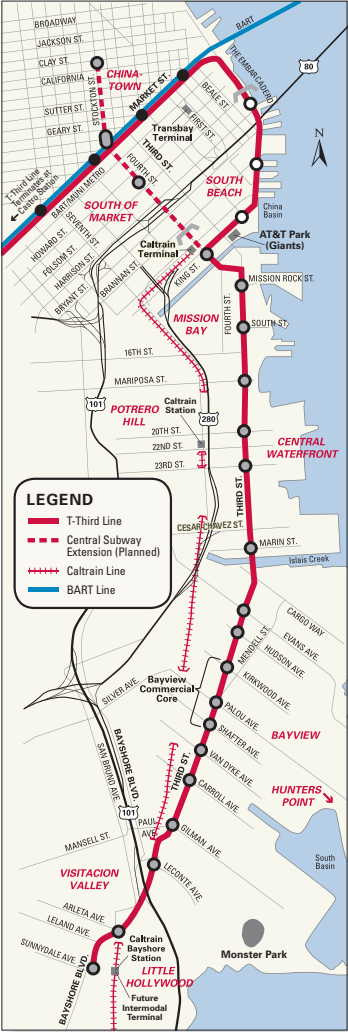
Tracking the T-Third Line

Third The new T-Third Muni light-rail line provides the neighborhoods of Mission Bay, Potrero Hill, Bayview, Hunters Point and Visitation Valley with a vital link to the larger San Francisco urban network. The line extends from the Sunnysdale Avenue terminus in the south all the way to the Castro Station, replacing N-Judah service between 4th and King Streets and the Embarcadero Station.

“This is the first leg of a two-phase extension,” explained MTC Executive Director Steve Heminger. “The second phase is the \$1.4 billion Central Subway project, which is one of our candidates for federal New Starts funding.” That project will add a 1.7-mile underground light-rail link from the Caltrain terminal at Fourth and King streets to Chinatown along an alignment below Fourth and Stockton streets, with three underground subway stations at Moscone Center, Union Square/Market Street and Chinatown.

— Karin Betts

San Francisco's Third Street Corridor



A total of 112 pieces of public art — sculptures on canopy poles (such as the one shown above), paving tiles on the platforms, cutout metal panels suspended over the canopy panes and double-sided windscreen images — grace the line.

T-Third Light-Rail Line Rolls Into Service in San Francisco

NEW LINE BRINGS AN INFUSION OF ART AND ACCESS TO THIRD STREET CORRIDOR

San Francisco Muni's newest light-rail line — dubbed the T-Third — started full service in early April amid a flurry of both celebration and concern. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi joined a host of dignitaries and community members at a vibrant gala event in the Bayview neighborhood to celebrate the line's opening. Neither rain nor rider complaints dampened the atmosphere, which celebrated the largest rail expansion in Muni's recent history and the inclusion of the city's southeast sector into the light-rail transit network.

Not only does the T-Third project add steel and concrete — 5.1 miles of track and 18 stations along the Third Street corridor — to the Muni light-rail network, it also promises to provide improved mobility to the traditionally underserved neighborhoods it crosses, enhance economic vitality along the line and ease traffic congestion.

Already the T-Third has transformed the corridor with spruced-up streetscapes, including new trees and street lamps, repaved sidewalks with decorative brick designs, and new awnings and signs for businesses along the train route. San Francisco's Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA) and the San Francisco Arts Commission partnered to invite artists residing in local neighborhoods to create installations for the line.

The MTA and local communities along the Third Street corridor celebrated the full service opening of the T-Third line with an all-day community festival. Area artists and local restaurateurs enlivened the celebration's theme — “Discover Neighborhood Treasures” — with African and step dancing, live music, and an array of free food.

“This connection we are establishing is about recognizing the greatness and diversity of all parts of our community. We are all San



Franciscans, and we are all moving forward together,” stated Speaker Pelosi (D-San Francisco) at the event. She also acknowledged the kinks and glitches that beset the line's first weeks of service — delays and unexpected electrical failures created systemwide slowdowns on the Bay Area's busiest public transit system. “Until riders are satisfied and have confidence



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi takes an inaugural ride on the T-Third.

in the system, we can't fully celebrate, but we can begin,” she said.

The Third Street project also has magnified development opportunities and concerns, which vary along the corridor. “The Third Street corridor clearly demonstrates that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to transit-oriented development,” stated Jose Luis Moscovich, S.F. County Transportation Authority executive director.

In Mission Bay, at the northern end of the rail line, a new urban neighborhood featuring up-market housing units and a biotechnology-focused research campus of the University of California/San Francisco is growing steadily. A different approach is required at the southern end of the corridor, where the challenge is to provide affordable housing choices through renovation of existing buildings and targeted development of vacant lots, without displacing long-time lower-income residents and businesses.

Funding for the \$648 million project came from a combination of local sales taxes, state Traffic Congestion Relief Program moneys and funds programmed or allocated by MTC from state and federal sources as well as Regional Measure 2 bridge tolls.

— Karin Betts

Calendar

Unless indicated otherwise, all meetings take place at: Metropolitan Transportation Commission Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter Lawrence D. Dahms Auditorium 101 Eighth Street, Oakland (Across from the Lake Merritt BART station)

THURSDAY
JUNE 7, 2007

10:30 am
Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee

FRIDAY
JUNE 8, 2007

9:30 am
Planning Committee*

10:15 am
Operations Committee*

10:30 am
Legislation Committee*

Public Hearing:
2007 Draft Public Participation Plan

MONDAY
JUNE 11, 2007

2 pm
TransLink® Operating Group
MetroCenter, Third Floor Fishbowl
Conference Room

TUESDAY
JUNE 12, 2007

3:30 pm
Minority Citizens Advisory Committee

WEDNESDAY
JUNE 13, 2007

9:30 am
Bay Area Toll Authority
Oversight Committee*

9:45 am
Administration Committee*

10 am
Programming and Allocations Committee*

Public Hearing:
Regional Measure 2 Funding Changes

1:30 pm
MTC Advisory Council

MONDAY
JUNE 18, 2007

1:30 pm
Partnership Technical Advisory Committee

*Webcast on <www.mtc.ca.gov>.

Note: Dates, times and locations of MTC meetings may change. Please confirm by calling 510.817.5757. Agendas, updated meeting schedules and meeting packets are posted on MTC's Web site: <www.mtc.ca.gov>.

Announcements

Draft Public Participation Plan

Engaging the public early and often in the decision-making process is critical to the success of any transportation plan or program, and is required by state and federal law. In an effort to develop a comprehensive plan that identifies specific opportunities for public involvement at various stages of the planning process, MTC embarked on a four-month evaluation of current public participation practices. The results are incorporated into the *Draft Public Participation Plan*, which is now available for public review.

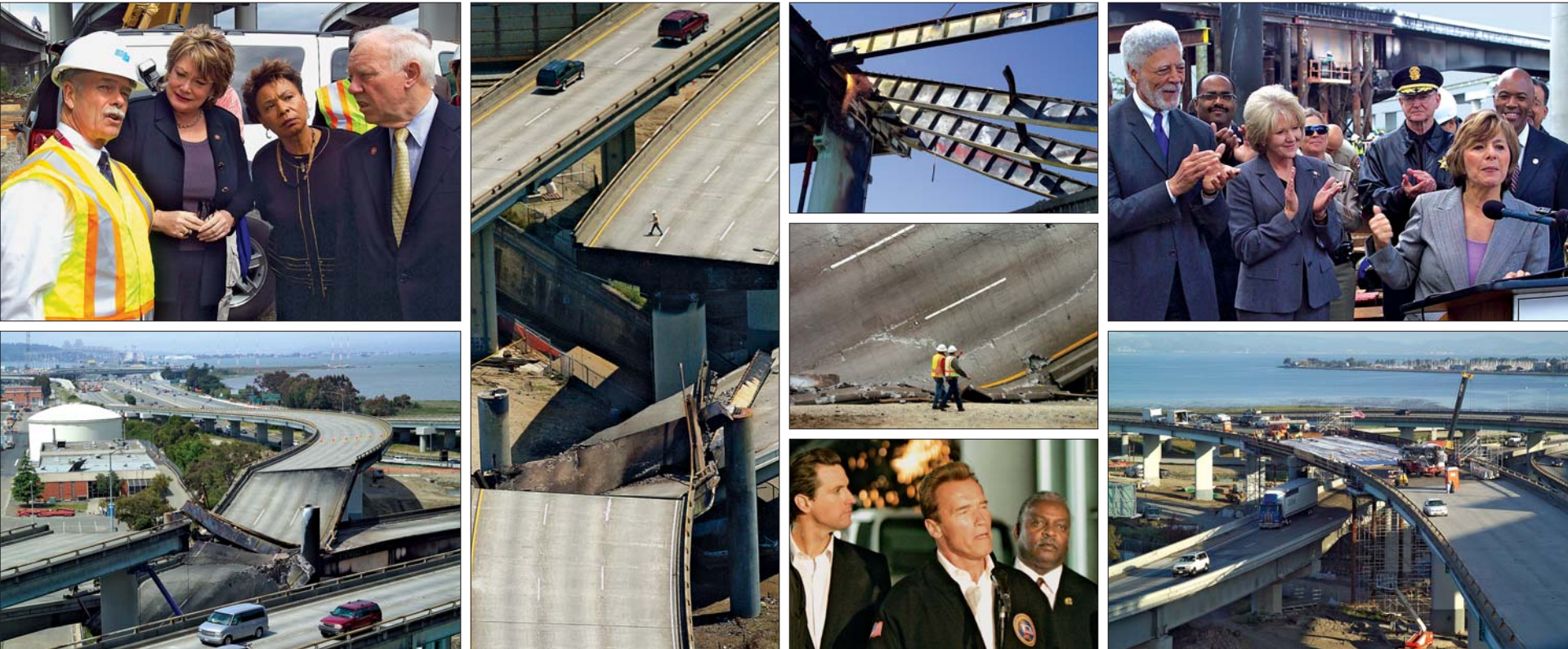
To obtain a copy, visit <www.mtc.ca.gov/get_involved>, or call the MTC Library at 510.817.5836.

MTC will hold a public hearing on the plan at its June 8 Legislation Committee meeting (see above). Comments will be accepted through 4 p.m. on June 20, 2007, and can be e-mailed to <info@mtc.ca.gov>, or submitted to the MTC Public Information Office at 101 Eighth Street, Oakland, CA, 94607. MTC expects to adopt a final plan in July.

The 11th World Conference On Transportation Research University of California, Berkeley

SUNDAY-THURSDAY
JUNE 24-28, 2007

MTC is proud to cosponsor the World Conference on Transportation Research, which is organized every three years and brings together transportation managers, policy analysts, academics and the like. This year's conference — the first in the United States — will feature Nobel Laureate in Economics (2000) and U.C. Professor Daniel McFadden as the keynote speaker. For more information and to register, see <www.wctrs.org> and <www.uctc.net/wctrs>.



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- 1 (Left to right) Caltrans Director Will Kempton answers questions at the site for U.S. Representatives Ellen Tauscher (D-Alamo), Barbara Lee (D-Oakland) and Jim Oberstar (D-Minnesota).
- 2 High heat from the tanker fire caused the roadway above to literally melt.
- 3 The overpass connecting the Bay Bridge to eastbound Interstate 580 collapsed onto the deck of the I-80/I-880 connector, shutting down traffic on two segments of the Bay Area's busiest interchange.
- 4 Demolition began immediately.
- 5 Workers survey the damage.
- 6 Governor Schwarzenegger (center, with S.F. Mayor Gavin Newsom at left and Assemblyman Sandré Swanson, D-Oakland, at right) issued an emergency declaration allowing crews to expedite repairs.
- 7 (Left to right) Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters and Dale Bonner, secretary of the State Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, look on as U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer speaks at a press conference held at the Maze.
- 8 The I-80/I-880 southbound connector opened to traffic ahead of schedule, a mere week after the meltdown, while work continued on closing the gap above.

Maze Meltdown Morphs Into Maze Miracle

The Maze meltdown became the Maze miracle when two crucial East Bay freeway connectors closed by a spectacular accident and fire reopened well ahead of schedule — and when predicted traffic chaos failed to materialize.

News of the “Maze meltdown,” as the media quickly dubbed the incident, dominated local headlines and TV broadcasts for days after the fiery April 29 tanker truck accident on the connector between westbound Interstate 80 and southbound Interstate 880. The heat from the resulting fireball was so intense that it caused a section of the overpass just above — the connector between the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge (I-80) and eastbound Interstate 580 — to literally melt onto the roadway below.

The two connectors are key elements of what is popularly known as the Maze, the multilevel web of roadways distributing traffic going to and from the Bay Bridge. According to MTC Director of High-

way Operations Albert Yee, the incident couldn't have occurred on a more crucial spot. “It's the convergence of three interstate freeways, so it's the busiest interchange in the Bay Area,” he said.

If there's a “luckily” to this story, it's that the meltdown happened in the wee hours of Sunday morning when the freeways were virtually empty, thereby averting any associated accidents or loss of life. The weekend timing also gave officials breathing room to work out a gameplan before the Monday morning commute.

MTC partnered with Caltrans and transit operators to quickly activate emergency services and to declare a free-ride day on all Bay Area public transit systems on Monday, April 30. They also scrambled to get the word out about commute alternatives via MTC's 511.org traveler information Web site and 511 phone line, the news media, and other avenues.

BART added extra runs and cars, while the Alameda-Oakland Ferry added extra boats. AC Transit also boosted service. The information

blitz, additional transit service and free rides did the trick: Come Monday morning, the Bay Bridge toll plaza was virtually empty as commuters took alternate freeway routes or took advantage of the offer of free transit rides. Traffic on the return trip in the afternoon also was light. While traffic volumes started to return to normal as the week wore on, MTC, Caltrans and the transit agencies were able to keep gridlock at bay.

Governor Schwarzenegger did his part by declaring a state of emergency in three counties, pledging to waive state contracting rules to expedite reconstruction and promising to pay for the day of free transit rides (the state also subsidized beefed-up transit service for the duration of the crisis).

More good news was unveiled at an end-of-the-week press conference held at the site of the meltdown. U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters was on hand to announce \$2 million in emergency federal aid, which she called the “first installment of funds that will give construction crews

the support they need to do their jobs.” Additional federal dollars are expected to follow once the full project cost is determined.

Meanwhile, work crews hustled around the clock to remove debris, test the viability of the damaged I-80/I-880 connector and make repairs. A mere week after the meltdown and several days ahead of schedule, Caltrans opened the I-80/I-880 connector in time for the Monday morning commute. The same day, Caltrans selected a firm to rebuild the I-80/I-580 connector — C.C. Myers, Inc. of Rancho Cordova, Calif., which came in with a low bid of \$867,075. The firm bet that it could earn up to \$5 million more in bonuses by delivering the job in early June instead of by Caltrans' deadline of June 27.

The Maze story became even more miraculous when crews finished the I-80/I-580 connector on May 24 — just 25 days after the accident, more than a month ahead of schedule and in time for the busy Memorial Day weekend. A *S.F. Chronicle* headline said it all: “A-MAZE-ING!” — Brenda Kahn

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